

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 13, 2014

Agenda Item: Addition to Pine Grove Pond FAS

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

On June 12, the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed FWP's request to pursue acquisition through purchase of two parcels covering 4.39 acres and the donation of 0.33 acres bordering the 18-acre Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access Site. The two fee parcels were appraised at \$20,000/acre, and are being purchased for \$10,000/acre. The parcels would provide additional access to the Whitefish River and establish the Whitefish River as a clear boundary between the FAS and private land. The 0.33 acre donation would be used as additional parking for the busy FAS. Pine Grove Pond FAS, located near Kalispell, is a popular family fishing pond with 30,000 visitor days each year.

The two parcels (each about 2 acres) are both part of larger pieces of property and are landlocked between the Pine Grove Pond FAS and the Whitefish River. The Flathead Land Trust recognized that this land would be a valuable addition to the FAS and initiated contact with the land owners. The 0.33 acre parcel on the northwest side of the FAS was offered as a donation by the Street Family Trust, who donated the original land for the FAS and developed the fishing pond. FWP is now seeking Commission approval to finalize this acquisition.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP conducted an environmental review and received 10 comments. All but one comment was in favor of the acquisition.

Alternatives and Analysis

A No Action Alternative involves the Commission not approving the acquisitions. FWP would decline the opportunity to accept the donated parcel and purchase the other two parcels, and the landowners could retain or dispose of the property at their discretion. Parking would remain inadequate and vehicle congestion on the access road would continue. Visitors would continue to trespass on private land to reach the Whitefish River. FWP would continue to manage the adjacent FAS for the benefit of the public and existing resources.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission authorize the purchase approximately 4.39 acres and accept donation of another 0.33 acres. The public would gain access to the Whitefish River and additional parking area. The acquisitions also provide a buffer protecting the FAS from future development.

Proposed Motion

I move that the F&W Commission authorize FWP to purchase approximately 4.39 acres bordering the south side of the FAS and finalize the donation of approximately 0.33 acres on the northern border of the FAS.